

does not just steal States of their right to create their own laws, it abolishes State laws that are on the books right now. The Thune amendment throws State laws out the window.

For the 35 States that have chosen to keep criminals with misdemeanor convictions from carrying concealed weapons, this amendment abolishes their laws. For the 31 States that have chosen to keep alcohol abusers from carrying concealed weapons, this amendment abolishes their laws.

The Thune amendment would force States to accept the weakest standard in the country and brings about a race to the bottom. Many of us represent States that do not want lax standards on who can walk around our communities with a weapon hidden in their garments.

To make matters worse, the Thune amendment not only overrides a State's concealed weapons laws, it could also override a State's assault weapons ban. That means if we have a ban in my State and someone gets a concealed weapons permit, they could bring an assault weapon into our State. This means even if a State has a ban on assault weapons, under this amendment, someone could legally enter that State with a hidden Uzi or assault weapon and travel around with it. Think about it. If a State's residents are not permitted to carry a particular weapon, someone can come into that State with a weapon that now is prohibited in that State.

That is one of the reasons more than 450 mayors across the country have expressed alarm about the Thune amendment. As these mayors explained in a letter to the Congress:

Each state ought to have the ability to decide whether to accept concealed carry permits issued in other states.

I don't want it in New Jersey, and I think Members across this Chamber will say: No, I don't want it in my State as well.

Supporters of this amendment like to claim that only law-abiding citizens get their hands on concealed weapons permits. But that is not true. In Alaska, for example, criminals who have repeatedly committed violent misdemeanors are permitted to carry concealed weapons. In Alaska, criminals who have repeatedly committed sex offenses are permitted to carry concealed weapons. According to a new study, during the 2-year period between May 2007 and April 2009, people holding concealed handgun permits killed at least 7 police officers and 44 other innocent people across the country.

Recently we have seen several gruesome examples of senseless murders committed by people holding concealed weapons permits. A few months ago, a 28-year-old concealed weapons permit holder went on a murderous rampage in Alabama. First he shot and killed his mother. Then he gunned down 10 others, including 2 young mothers and a father and an 18-month-old girl.

A few weeks later, another concealed weapons permit holder went on a kill-

ing spree in Binghamton, NY. This gunman drove a car up to a citizenship services center and barricaded the back door with his car so the innocent people who were inside would be trapped as he proceeded to kill those who were in his sights. The gunman sprayed gunfire throughout the center, killed 13 people, and wounded several more before taking his own life.

The next day another concealed carry permit holder destroyed more lives. In Pittsburgh, two police officers arrived at a house to quell a domestic conflict. The two officers were ambushed and killed by the gunman who held a concealed weapons permit. Minutes later, the gunman shot and killed a third officer who arrived at the scene.

The special interest gun lobby is hanging its hopes on the prospect that this Chamber will abandon common sense and pass the Thune amendment. But this gun lobby's dream is a nightmare for our country. It violates States rights and it will make it easier for gun traffickers to move firearms. If the Thune amendment becomes law, traffickers could now load up a car and take guns across State lines legally, as long as the driver has a concealed weapons permit in any State.

History will record that this Senate was asked to decide whether to put families further in danger or keep them safe, whether to savage State laws or honor them, and whether to usurp States rights or preserve them. I hope my colleagues will do the right thing. I urge them to vote no, no, no, on the Thune amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAUFMAN). The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. I yield 10 minutes to the Senator from Oklahoma.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I think a little bit of history is important for us now. Let me give a quote of what Thomas Jefferson had to say. It is important for us to hear him. We recognize his wisdom in lots of what he did for us as one of the Founders of this country. Here is what he said about guns: Gun control laws disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes. Such laws only make worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants. They serve, rather, to encourage rather than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man.

Granted, that was in a different day and time, but his words ring true. To those who are opposing this amendment who truly believe we ought to have a total ban on firearms, I recognize that is a legitimate position for some of those people. But what I find both disingenuous and also curious and funny at the same time is the number of my colleagues who now come to the floor to preserve States rights when 95 percent of their votes, in the last Con-

gress and this one and the ones that preceded, voted to take away those very same States rights in every other area of freedom.

We just had a hearing on a Supreme Court Justice. She got it wrong on the second amendment. The second amendment is written into the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Why was the 14th amendment even brought up to Congress? The historical debate shows that during reconstruction, freed Black slaves were losing their right to own a gun simply because they were Black, simply because they were freed slaves. Many Southern States passed laws taking that right away. The due process of the 14th amendment came about so that we could preserve the right of individuals to own arms and defend themselves.

What I find ludicrous in this debate is any discussion of an assault weapons ban or assault weapons. You can't conceal one. That is No. 1. No. 2, we had the Senator from New Jersey mention the Uzi. It is illegal to own an Uzi in this country. So you are already a criminal, you are already a felon, you are already one of those individuals Jefferson was talking about when you claim to say that we are going to step all over State laws.

We had a vote in terms of honoring States rights in terms of the national park bill on guns. Twenty-nine of my colleagues, thirteen of whom now are defending States rights, stepped all over States rights with their vote against the Coburn amendment when it came to allowing people to have supreme their State law in terms of national parks.

Nobody comes to the Senate floor a purist. The vast majority of people who are debating against this amendment on the fundamental principle of stepping on States rights have a voting record that 98 percent of the time they don't care about States rights; they care about the Federal Government.

I have an offer. Any Member who wishes to vote against this amendment, if you will all endorse the Enumerated Powers Act and see that we pass it through Congress, then you can demonstrate your fidelity to the 10th amendment. Except nary a one of those who are opposing this amendment has endorsed the Enumerated Powers Act in this Congress or the last. The arguments ring hollow when we talk about the 10th amendment because the true action would be to recognize the limited powers of the Federal Government to enforce the 10th amendment, and we wouldn't be having this debate.

States rights are convenient only when it comes to something we don't like. They are rarely utilized to truly defend States rights. You have to follow the laws of the State you are in; that is respecting States rights. For every incident and tragedy of somebody who had a concealed carry permit, we can give you 10,000 tragedies of those where gun control allowed the criminals to have guns but the innocents not.